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10. NOTES ON SIGHTINGS OF GREEN AVADAVAT *AMANDAVA FORMOSA* IN A FEW LOCALITIES IN SOUTHERN ARAVALLIS, INDIA

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The Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa* is a threatened endemic and red data listed passerine species of India (Bhargava 1996; BirdLife International 2012). It is distributed mainly in Central India from Rajasthan (Mt. Abu) to Bihar and south Uttar Pradesh to north Andhra Pradesh (Manakadan *et al.* 2011). In Rajasthan, it has been mainly reported from the Mt. Abu area in Rajasthan (Lodhiya 1999; Tiwari and Varu 1999; Mehra and Sharma 2004). There is also a report of it as a resident species in the campus of the Desert Regional Station of the Zoological Survey of India in Jodhpur (Sivaperuman *et al.* 2004). In this paper, we report on our sightings of the species in other sites of Rajasthan, namely Kumbhalgarh, Kaler Forest Block, and Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary.

Kumbhalgarh: Kumbhalgarh lies in Rajsamand district in southern Aravallis. It is an extensive hilly area. A large portion of this hilly zone comes under Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, while the rest is being managed as territorial forest. Numerous patches of revenue lands and villages are scattered across Kumbhalgarh. Many small grasslands, locally called beeds or beedas, are scattered all over the Kumbhalgarh zone. The historical Kumbhalgarh fort is present in this zone, hence whole area is popularly known as 'Kumbhalgarh'.

We first recorded the Green Avadavat in the Kumbhalgarh area in 1986 in Oda village in a sugarcane field. Its distribution here is largely confined to the vicinity of sugarcane fields, scrub forests and rolling hilly grasslands. Sightings were relatively more in Kumbhalgarh area till 1990. Till then, sugarcane cultivation was common from Kumbhalgarh to Gogunda area, and the species was recorded

in Kumbhalgarh, Losing, Sayra, and Gogunda areas. In recent years, with increasing aridity and receding ground water table, sugarcane cultivation has reduced drastically, and this has probably affected the population of the Green Avadavat, as according to Ali and Ripley (1983), the Green Avadavat prefers grass and low bushes, tall grassland, sugarcane fields and boulder-strewn jungle. During 1986, flocks of 10-25 birds were recorded, but now sightings are scarce and flocks of more than 7-8 birds are rarely seen.

Kaler Forest Block and Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary: Sajjangarh is the smallest sanctuary of Rajasthan state, covering an area about 5.19 sq. km. It is present towards the western outskirts of Udaipur city in Udaipur district. Kaler Reserve Forest, west of the Sajjangarh Sanctuary, is contiguous with the sanctuary. Both the localities are situated nearly 80 km south of Kumbhalgarh. Sajjangarh and Kaler are part of southern Aravallis, with thorny and deciduous forests. The fringe area in both the localities has low density of trees. These fringes turn into rolling grasslands during the monsoon. Grass cover remains intact up to winter, but get grazed or destroyed by fires up to the beginning of summer. Kaler Forest Block and Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary have a sparse jungle of short trees intermixed with grassy patches: *Apluda mutica*, *Sehima nervosum*, and *Heteropogon contortus*. *Acacia senegal*, *Prosopis juliflora*, *Boswellia serrata*, *Lantana camara*, *Grewia tanex*, *G. flavescentis*, *Dichrostachys cinerea*, *Diospyros montana*, and *Capparis sepiaria* are found. These forests have a network of seasonal nullahs.

On being informed of the presence of Green Avadavat in the Kaler Forest Block by a forest guard, we visited the

site on December 24, 2011, and saw a bird in the thicket of *Acacia senegal* and *Prosopis juliflora*. It was observed for about 8 minutes before it flew into the adjoining Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary. The next day, we sighted three birds, which again flew into the Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary. Two birds were seen on December 27 near a waterhole in the Gorella Beat of the Sanctuary by a forest guard (Sada Shiv Tiwari). We have visited the Kaler forest and Sajjangarh Sanctuary occasionally since 1986, but had never seen this species till these sightings. Since the last two years, some

farmers of Gorella village, at the southern border of the Sanctuary, have started growing sugarcane. The cultivation of sugarcane could have attracted the birds to the area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are thankful to Shri Rishi Raj Dewal for providing information about the Green Avadavat, and officials of Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary and Kaler Forest Block for the help given.

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11. SIGHTING OF ALBINO COMMON SAND BOA *GONGYLOPHIS CONICUS* FROM NORTHERN WESTERN GHATS, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA

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During a faunistic survey of the Northern Western Ghats in Maharashtra, the first author sighted an albino Common Sand Boa *Gongylophis conicus* (Schneider, 1801) at Laling Ghat Forest (20° 47' 36" N; 74° 44' 14" E; 380 m above msl) in Dhule district on October 07, 2011. The boa was pale pinkish to whitish with obscure faint patches on its body. It had red eyes and a reddish tongue. The snake was resting under dense vegetation on moist sandy soil near the bank of a reservoir below the Laling Waterfall. The sand boa had a total body length of about 70 cm. It was photographed (Fig. 1) and released where it was found. It was sighted again in December 2011, in the same locality and habitat. The sighting of a full grown albino is significant as most albinos are easily noticed and fall prey to predators.

There are very few reports on albinism in reptiles in general and snakes in particular from India (D'Abreu 1918, Lahiri 1955, Kumar 1988). There are also no published reports of total albinism both in the family Boidae, and in the Common Sand Boa. Whitaker (1971) has recorded a specimen



Fig. 1: The albino Common Sand Boa was released after being photographed